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THE GOLDEN AGE.

THE GOLDEN AGE:

A Satire.

46728

BY

ALFRED AUSTIN,

AUTHOR OF 'THE SEASON, A SATIRE;' 'THE HUMAN TRAGEDY;' 'A VINDICATION OF LORD BYRON," ETC.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.
1871.

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PREFACE.

A WRITER has so few fitting opportunities of addressing his readers on the subject of his own compositions, that the author of *The Golden Age* trusts he will be pardoned for seizing this occasion to make the following brief observations. Though partly retrospective, they would not have been expressed at all but for their bearing on his future designs.

It is just ten years since he published *The Season;* and he has no reason to complain of the reception accorded to it both then and since, especially when he reflects that its literary method and its ethical aim are diametrically opposed to the form and purpose of those poetical compositions for which the taste of our day has shown so decided a partiality. But, about a twelvemonth after the first appearance of *The Season,* he ventured to submit to the public a longer and more ambitious work, entitled *The Human Tragedy.*

Its fate is accurately described by a foreign critic:* '*Ce roman-poème fut simplement voué au néant, et regardé comme non avenu.*' After explaining what, in his opinion, was the cause of this indifference, he is good enough to add: '*Une indifférence imméritée, hâtons-nous de la déclarer, attendu que l'œuvre nouvelle était de beaucoup supérieure au poème dont on avait fait si grand bruit.*'

It is because this opinion is likewise the opinion of the author himself, and is strongly confirmed by the privately expressed testimony of persons on whose judgment and candour he can best rely, that he proposes to persist in a scheme he has long entertained, of giving to *The Human Tragedy* that fourfold aspect and development—the Religious, the Romantic, the Ethnical, and the Humanitarian—which it seems to him, unhappily, but too capable of assuming. He can only say that he has sought to arrive at no such conclusion, still less to be its mouthpiece and interpreter. They have both forced themselves upon him,

* 'Un Romancier Satirique Anglais:' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 Septembre 1865. If the author is obliged to borrow the language of a foreign critic, it is because his works have never had the honour of being criticised in his native tongue.

and he appears to have no option. In obedience to this new task, *The Human Tragedy*, as it originally stood, and which treated only of what is strangely called the softer passion, has been withdrawn from circulation.

As for the following Satire, it has occupied the author's mind for several years, and his pen for several months. But for the absorbing duel between France and Germany, of which he was throughout a close spectator, it would have been published last autumn. He long resisted writing it; but now that it is written and is being given to the world, he must add that it expresses his most profound if melancholy convictions.

March 16*th*, 1871.

THE GOLDEN AGE.

ARGUMENT.

THE first Golden Age. Its disappearance. Its promised return. Non-fulfilment of the Promise. The craving after and joyful discovery of Another; and the foundation, through the pursuit of Gold, of the Golden Age as a permanent institution. The view of existence which first presents itself to the ingenuous boy. The destruction of his day-dreams by golden experience, and his perversion to rational views of life. His success. Occasionally even, his failure. The early lays of Lelius, and his final domestication in Grub-street. Comparison of so-called artists, their merits and rewards, with those of the real artists of other times. Love of the simple girl for Hylas, her admiration for Solon, her respect for Cato, and her marriage with Crœsus. The results of this happy union. The career of Plutus. He flings his purse to the heavenly maid Olympia, who picks it up amid the congratulations of the polite world. Their agreeable life together, and final separation in the Divorce Court, where Plutus has his horns tipped with gold. The rage for gold by no means confined to the base-born or the vulgar. The war-horse refined to the two-year-old, to gratify modern aristocratic tastes and aspirations. The Story of Lucullus. The Horrors of War exchanged for the Horrors of Peace; Feudalism supplanted by Competition; and Force deposed in favour of Fraud. The domestic misery wrought by the latter, compared with the havoc imputed by History to the former, considered at length. The wealth and splendour of London. Its poverty and squalor. The Golden Mean between these two extremes, and some of the Golden Mean's consequences. Adulteration of Food. Life-belts made of straw. Baby-farming and Infanticide. Thanks to Gold, Woman as case-

hardened as Man. Clara and Claribel. Our Private Worth equalled by our Public Virtue. Servility and Bribery the paths to Parliament. Men's mode of getting into it matched by their anxiety for their country when they succeed. The powerlessness of such Legislators to arrest or control the Crowd. The Lords as servile as the Commons, and for the same motives. The Aristocracy implored to be honest, if they are not allowed to be wise, and to save their Country by a virtuous example. The Muse's Remonstrance with a young Prince. Our Foreign Policy as much directed by the love of gold as our domestic fortunes. The abandonment of Denmark. The Second French Empire built on gold. Its disappearance in a day. The French Army and Nation alike corrupted by gold, and their successive defeat and humiliation. The Victor coaxed homewards over a bridge of gold. Parallel between England and France. Gold the guiding Genius of both. Our Peace-at-any-price Policy, and our gradual dismemberment of the Empire in order to save our gold. The futility of such a course demonstrated. The comparison with Tarpeia, and the culminating betrayal of England. Summons to Britain to confront the world in arms, if necessary. Failing spirit enough for that, the Author prays that the glacial period may return, and the Island be once more wrapped in impenetrable mists.

THE GOLDEN AGE.

LONG ere the Muse the strenuous chords had swept,
And the first lay as yet in silence slept,
A Time there was which since has stirred the lyre
To notes of wail and accents warm with fire;
Moved the soft Mantuan to his silvery strain,[a]
And him who sobbed in pentametric pain;[b]

[a] The birthplace of Virgil is conclusively ascertained to have been close to Mantua, however scholars may dispute about the spot of his interment. The lines, however, which are known to have once been inscribed on the tomb in whose presence Boccaccio abjured the mercantile pursuits to which his father had dedicated him, must always remain an admirable summary of his life and labours:

'Mantua me genuit; Calabri rapuere; tenet nunc
Parthenope. Cecini pascua, rura, duces.'

[b] I fear there is a sufficient number of learned people in this

To which the World, waxed desolate and old,
Fondly reverts, and calls the Age of Gold.

Then, without toil, by vale and mountain side,
Men found their few and simple wants supplied;
Plenty, like dew, dropped subtle from the air,
And Earth's fair gifts rose prodigal as prayer.

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world to make it necessary to state, that though the alternation of the pentameter with the hexameter, which constituted in Latin the elegiac metre, was the favourite metrical method of Ovid, and is one of the chief beauties of the *Tristia*, his well-known passage on the Age of Gold and its successors occurs in a poem where the hexameter alone is employed. Though I don't think I ever knew the passage in question by heart, and had certainly not read it for nearly twenty years when I wrote the opening lines of this satire, how largely I was indebted to unconscious recollection of it may be seen by a reference to the first book of the *Metamorphoses*, v. 89-150.

Love, with no charms except its own to lure,
Was swiftly answered by a love as pure.
No need for wealth; each glittering fruit and flower,
Each star, each streamlet, made the maiden's dower.
Far in the future lurked maternal throes,
And children blossomed painless as the rose.
No harrowing question 'why,' no torturing 'how,'
Bent the lithe frame or knit the youthful brow.
The growing mind had naught to seek or shun;
Like the plump fig it ripened in the sun.
From dawn to dark Man's life was steeped in joy,
And the gray sire was happy as the boy.
Nature with Man yet waged no troublous strife,
And Death was almost easier than Life.

Safe on its native mountains throve the oak,
Nor ever groaned 'neath greed's relentless stroke.
No fear of loss, no restlessness for more,[c]
Drove the poor mariner from shore to shore.
No distant mines, by penury divined,
Made him the sport of fickle wave or wind.
Rich for secure, he checked each wish to roam,
And hugged the safe felicity of home.[d]

[c] It has been objected by a private critic, that 'fear of loss' does not drive people from shore to shore, whatever 'restlessness for more' may do. But I submit that we have reached that refined pitch of civilisation, at which men hold their wealth with so little sense of security, that it is often the positive dread of its slipping away from them which makes them plunge into speculation.

[d] Here the latent reminiscence of Ovid becomes more marked. He writes:

'Nondum cæsa suis, peregrinum ut viseret orbem,
Montibus, in liquidas pinus descenderat undas,
Nullaque mortales præter sua litora norant;'

which, I lately discovered, Dryden has thus rendered:

'The mountain trees in distant prospect please,
Ere yet the pine descended to the seas;

Those days are long gone by; but who shall say
Why, like a dream, passed Saturn's Reign away?
Over its rise, its ruin, hangs a veil,
And naught remains except a Golden Tale.
Whether 'twas sin or hazard that dissolved
That happy scheme by kindly Gods evolved;
Whether Man fell by lucklessness or pride,—[e]
Let jarring sects, and not the Muse, decide.

Ere sails were spread new oceans to explore,
And happy mortals, unconcerned for more,
Confined their wishes to their native shore.'

[e] The mild Virgil, whose reference to the Age of Gold in the first book of the *Georgics* is exceedingly brief, gives a reason for its termination worthy of a Calvinist divine:

'Pater ipse colendi
Haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem
Movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda.'

But when that cruel Fiat smote the earth,
Primeval Joy was poisoned at its birth.
In sorrow stole the infant from the womb,
The agëd crept in sorrow to the tomb.
The ground, so beauteous once, refused to bear
More than was wrung by sower, seed, and share.
Ofttimes would ruthless winds or torrents raze
The ripening fruit of toilsome nights and days.
Each one in turn grew jealous of his own,
And fenced his patch with ditch and churlish stone.
As greed uprose, and greed engendered strife,
Contention raged coincident with life.
Man against man, maid against maiden turned,
And the soft breast with envious passions burned.

The loss of one was hailed as others' gain,
And pleasure took unnatural birth from pain.
Goaded by woe, and through tradition's lore
Mindful of all the blissfulness of yore,
The Human Race, its sorrows to assuage,
Dreamed afar off a second Golden Age;
Not in the dim irrevocable Past,
But in a Future just as vague and vast.
The prophet's lips, the poet's flattering pen,
Revelled in forecasts of that golden Then.
The days should come when grief would be no more,
And Peace and Plenty rule from shore to shore;
All men alike enjoy what none did earn,
And even more than Saturn's Reign return.

As years rolled on, as centuries went by,
And still that Promised Time seemed no more nigh,[f]
Mankind at length, outwearied with delays,
Gave up all hope of those seductive days.
Then other prophets, other scribes arose,
A nearer, surer Eden to disclose.
'O, long-befooled!' they said, 'awake, and deem
The Past a tale, the Future but a dream.
Here, in the living Present, act your part,[g]
Straining its vulgar blessings to your heart.

[f] We have still among us a sanguine race of mortals who believe that the Golden Age is not behind us, but still to come, and that we are marching steadily and perceptibly towards it. Perhaps the events of the last few years have somewhat shaken the holders of this amiable creed.

[g] This would seem to be the theory favoured by the present

Let hand with hand and brain with brain contend,
And each one labour to some selfish end.
In wealth and riot, luxury and power,
Baffle the mockery of the transient hour.
If thousands fall, if tens of thousands bleed,
Will not a hundred, or a score, succeed?
Let those who cannot yield to those who can—
Fate has its piles of victims; why not Man?
Better a furious fight where some one wins,
Than sluggish life which ends as it begins.

Laureate, and much in vogue at the time of his writing *The Golden Year*:

'What stuff is this!
Old writers pushed the happy season back,—
The more fools they,—we forward; dreamers both.
. . . . . but well I know
That unto him who works and feels he works,
This same grand year is ever at the doors.'

Vain was the bard who, whilst the World was new,
'Twixt men and beasts the fond distinction drew,
That these confine their downward gaze to earth,
Whilst man looks up, enamoured of his birth.[h]
Not in the skies, but deep beneath the soil,
There will you find your happiness and spoil.
Enough for brutes its simple face to know,
But godlike man must pierce and delve below.
Deep in its bowels seek the shining ore,
And at its touch shall Saturn reign once more.
For him whose thews are sound, whose vision clear,
Whose purpose firm, the Golden Age is here.'

[h] 'Pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.'
Ovid, *Met.* i. 84-6.

Never from cave or tripod, mount or glade,
Issued a voice so welcomed, so obeyed.
From zone to zone the Golden Gospel flew,
And in its train mankind obedient drew.
See from their seats the ancient Gods dethroned,
Altars upset, and oracles disown'd.
The Muses, scared, conceal the smothered lyre;
No longer prized, the Graces swift retire;
Virtue, a butt for ribalds, seeks her shroud,
And even Venus veils herself in cloud.
Religion, Ethics, all men erst adored,
Hymned on the harp, or fought for with the sword.
All lofty scopes, all ends esteemed of old,
Dissolve like mist before the rage for gold.
The priest for gold makes traffic of his robe;
For gold the soldier desolates the globe;

The poet shapes for gold his venal lays;
Through gold Vice stalks caparisoned with praise.
Tempted by gold, the virgin sells her charms,
Though no Immortal slips into her arms.[1]
Saddled with gold, the adventurer can buy
Titles, precedence, place, and dignity.
High, middle, low, the young, the ripe, the old,
Man, woman, child, live, die, are damned for Gold.

Soon as the youthful mind begins to ope,
It searches Life's significance and scope;
And, fed by generous impulse year by year,
Dreams for itself some glorious career.

[1] The Immortal character of the strange visitor of Danaë—*converso in pretium Deo*, as Horace with exquisite ambiguity expresses it—no doubt largely consoled her pagan parents. In these Christian times, the consolation would arise rather from the valuable form in which he cloaked his misdoing.

Its shall it be, instructed by the Muse,
Truth to abet, and beauty to diffuse;
With full-blown sail, and genius at the helm,
To steer men's thoughts to a serener realm.
Perhaps the ingenuous boy would fain recall
Tintoret's canvas, Memmi's fresco'd wall;
With godlike pencil purify the mart,
And life ennoble with the breath of Art.
Maybe he burns, by Plato's failure fired,
To scale the heights which every wing have tired,
Seize first each part, then comprehend the whole,
And solve the eternal problem of the Soul.
Be these his aims, or, nobler still, to train
His kind to mutiny till Virtue reign,

Soon doth he learn to count his lovely schemes
A host of bubbles in a world of dreams.
Experience whispers early, Have a care!
Who with the Muse would live must live on air.
The tempting maid is but a poet's lie,
'Who gave to song what gold could never buy.'[j]
Confront the world, take counsel with the throng;
Their verdict, what? 'The thing's not worth a song.'
Are you content you now have learnt your price?
Come, sink the Muse, and don't be quite so nice.
Start a new Company, and float the shares,
Then lunch with Ministers and dine with Mayors.

[j] 'Here's to her who long
Hath waked the poet's sigh,
The girl who gave to song
What gold could never buy.'
Moore.

Pimp for a Party, praise a Premier's heart,
Head a subscription, and then shine—a Bart.
Return your income fifty thousand clear—
The devil's in it, or you'll die a peer.
Success so great is never done by halves—
'Tis only virtue, when 'tis greatest, starves.

Perhaps his breast, untutored yet to serve,
Spurns the base counsel with a proud reserve;
For Youth is stubborn, and when Nature draws,
In vain a parent's warning, wisdom's saws.
Let cravens straight their impotence confess,
And sell their birthright for a filthy mess;
In flowers see, bee-like, nought but stuff for hives,
And for foul lucre prostitute their lives;

They have not failed who never once have tried,
Or, if they failed, they failed for want of pride.
He, he at least his soul will ne'er demean,
But 'mong the foul will keep his honour clean.

O touching sight, to witness day by day
His splendid generous day-dreams fade away!
His sire reproaches, and his brothers scoff,
His mother doubts, his sisters e'en fall off.
The neighbours pity, strangers deem him mad;
Girls, smiling, whisper, What a foolish lad!
Meanwhile his compeers, started in the race,
Are swiftly marching on to power and place.
One makes a *coup*, and weds a wife of rank;
Another's junior partner in a bank.

A third in sugar with unscriptural hand,
Traffics, and builds a lasting house on sand.
A fourth, for beer and piety renowned,
Owns all the publics in the country round;[k]
Its drink adulterates with face demure,
But burns with zeal to keep opinion pure;
Cares not one jot for bodies drunk or sick,
But scans your soul like a new Dominick.
The fifth, the patron of a new balloon,
Projects a Company to reach the moon;

[k] What the 'final cause' of the connection may be, it is not easy to say; but few things strike a *bonâ-fide* traveller, in the home counties at least, as more remarkable, than that our most severe political pietists give what may be called the saints' names to the principal public-houses and beer-shops. The fact that they are likewise all enormously rich, and nearly all of them members of the House of Commons, perhaps helps to explain the phenomenon somewhat.

Baits his prospectus with a batch of peers,
And vows nought pays like money in the Spheres.
Shares in the moon advanced—advancing still.
Then comes a crash—stock guaranteed at nil.
But sure, the man is ruined? Not at all;
He scarce can tumble who has sense to crawl.
Your modern Icarus is much too wise
On his own pinions to attempt the skies—
On others' soaring follies doth he rise.
Long ere the bubble burst his shares were sold;
Just at that moment he had need of gold.
Singed wings, you know, are but for simple folk;
He, with his peers, 'scapes safe from flame and smoke,
And buys a borough with the happy stroke.

Few are the souls who die for Cato's creed:[1]
To fail seems base, when all around succeed.
Foiled in his purpose, both by foe and friend,
Through noble means to reach a noble end,
The baffled boy forswears his cherished dream,
And learns to swim, like others, with the stream.
Keen to recover precious moments lost,
And taught by bitter tasks what Virtue cost,
He midst the rush, whilst others rise and fall,
Swims on, the most unscrupulous of all.
Let others chouse with care, he cheats with pluck,
And millions stake their all upon his luck.
His daring overawes the small, the great,
And whilst he plunders they but peculate.

[1] *Victrix causa Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni*, by some people deemed an irreverent, not to say blasphemous, line, is paraphrased in our times with cynical brevity—'Nothing succeeds like success.'

He lures the easy, makes the fat his spoil,
Pares the lean wage of proletarian toil;
Swindles the widow of her hoarded mite,
Drags the poor pensioner once more to fight;
Robs age of rest, and youth of prospects fair,
Plunges the sanguine bridegroom in despair;
Severs the ties made sacred long by home,
And sends the son from sire across the foam;
Dashes the faith of plighted swain and maid,
And helps alone the cynic sexton's spade:
Does all that well beseems a Fallen Star—
It needs a Lucifer to fall so far!

Sometimes will Fortune on the traitor scowl,
And e'en with gold not pay a deed so foul.
He who was born a glittering child of light,
Trenchant as Raphael, as Ithuriel bright,

Yet sells his soul a vulgar prize to reap,
And for brute guerdons holds his honour cheap,
Too often finds that he who, grovelling, flies
From unrewarded reverie in the skies,
And seeks in venal efforts to employ
The gifts God formed for beauty and for joy,
Makes but a barren barter of his birth,
And Heaven foregoes, without securing earth.
See how he sinks! The more he strains to clutch
Terrestrial spoil, unworthy of his touch,
It seems, for him, to take elusive shapes,
And like a shadow from his grasp escapes.
As baser wax his aims, more mean his scope,
More and still more he sprawls—the sport of Hope.
Still as he tries to suffocate his soul,
Farther beyond him seems the carnal goal.

In vain he turns to catch the favouring gale;
Becalmed he lies—he labours but to fail.
Poor and despised, he now would fain retrace
His erring steps to his first dwelling-place,
But finds, alas! baseness hath borne its fruit;
Wings long unused have withered at the root.
He who in vain has crawled in vain would fly,
And rots abandoned both by earth and sky.
Meaner his end than that poor tradesman's doom,
Who, asked what words of honour on his tomb
His friends should place, with cynic touch replied,
'Here lies who, born a man, a grocer died!'[m]

[m] The literal translation of a terse and affecting French epitaph,—'*Né homme—mort épicier.*'

Whom doth this foe of human virtue spare?
Look round! More sweet its victims, the more fair.
Its natural slaves, who, spawned from wealth, are born
To Traffic's tricks they lack the soul to scorn,
Whose lust for lucre is their proper lot,
It just as oft impoverishes as not.
'Tis those in whom the Unseen God inspires
The restless leaven of divine desires;
Who, from the moment that they lisp, betray
An alien spirit housed within their clay;
Whose fretful youth life's narrow limits chafe,
And yearns for worlds more spacious, if less safe;
Striving to reach, despite its fleshly thrall,
That larger Something which surrounds us all;—

These, these the souls — and not that baser band—
To whom Gold loves to stretch a helping hand;
With early smiles their generous aims to bless,
And lead them, blind, to ruinous success.
When Lelius chanted first his fragrant lays,
Men praised, and he was amply paid with praise.
Not salons' sycophant, nor Fashion's bard,
No glittering heaps did his sweet notes reward.
He was content with audience fit, though few,
When to his side the cunning demon drew.
'Your pen's worth gold; you need but blunt its point;
Come, cut the Muse; the times are out of joint.
Fame's well enough, but comfort has its laws;
You'll make a damned poor supper off applause.

Sing, be select, and starve. Prose is the thing—
The thing that pays. The Million now is King.
Write gossip, scandal, slander—what you will;
A well-filled purse awaits a ready quill.'
The curst insidious demon has his way,
And Grub-street swallows Lelius for aye.

Turn from the pen, and for a while survey
The wide domains which brush and canvas sway.
Enter those realms, and what do we behold?
Art, heavenly Art, the slave and pimp of gold![n]

[n] There prevails an idea that an age of wealth is peculiarly favourable to Art, and I believe that a gentleman has written a volume to corroborate this popular commonplace. It is, however, a grievous delusion, and arises from an inability to distinguish between technic and plastic Art—an inability which could exist only in an age, albeit so rich and addicted to furniture, withal so eminently unartistic, as our own.

Time was when its poor votaries were too proud
To sate the itch of a vain-glorious crowd,
Serve the mean aims of narrow personal pelf,
And swell the ignoble retinue of Self.
Only the State, which merges private ends,
Or sacred Church, which lifts them and extends,
Might then presume the artist's craft to claim,
And paid him, happy, with immortal Fame.
Here, Friendship's guest, where fairest Florence lies,°
A dream in stone, stretched out before mine eyes,
I think of all the treasures there enshrined,
And what small dole nurtured each master mind;

° A recording line of gratitude to T. A. Trollope, the historian of *The Commonwealth of Florence* and author of that charming story *La Beata*, on the terraces of whose exquisite villa at Ricorboli, overlooking the loveliest of all cities, a considerable portion of *The Golden Age* was composed.

Or led by memory o'er the classic chain
Which Umbrian slope divides from Tuscan plain,[p]
I all the priceless unbought gems recall
That link with heaven Assisi's frescoed wall;[q]
Then, borne on wings of weakness, I repair
To mine own land, and groan to think that there,
Debased by Fashion to a venal trade,
Art counts its triumphs by its fortunes made;

[p] It is, of course, only a spur of the Apennines, and not that grand range itself, which breaks the continuity of Tuscany and modern Umbria.

[q] Certainly if one could think of giving to Heaven a local habitation and a name, it would be to 'My Father's house,' containing 'many mansions,' which rises over the bones of the unspeakably great Francis of Assisi, and is so profusely illustrated by the celestial touches of Giotto and Cimabue. Many readers will doubtless remember the lines of Dante:

'. . . Chi d' esso loco fa parole,
Non dica Ascesi, chè direbbe corto,
Ma Oriente, se proprio dir vuole.'

Paradiso, xi. 53-55.

Spurned by the State, and by the Church unsought,[r]

Works but for wealth, and by the base is bought;

Stranger to altars, palaces, or domes,

Pampers the pomp of ostentatious homes.

How changed the days since Duccio's hand of old

On Saints and Virgins lavished costly gold;[s]

[r] Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his *Tour through Flanders and Holland*, observes that it may be worthy of consideration, how far the circumstance that Protestant countries have thought proper to exclude pictures from their churches may be the cause of no Protestant country having ever produced a history-painter. No doubt such a prohibition would operate as a check upon the production of good historical pictures, if the tendency to produce them existed; but that the removal of it would not necessarily create the tendency, may be seen from the execrable pictures which adorn Italian churches built or renovated last century, and from the present deplorable condition of Italian art.

[s] In the chapel called of the Holy Sacrament in the Cathedral of Siena, there is a work of this artist's in twenty-seven compartments, which, owing to the amount of gold and ultramarine expended on it, cost 3000 golden florins; whilst Duccio's personal wage was about twenty pounds English.

But for himself asked but a few poor crowns,
Less than we give to harlequins and clowns.
Now do our mercenary tricksters grudge
Almost the very canvas that they smudge;
Yet scan with greedy eyes the glittering heap
That opulent folly holds, for once, so cheap.
See, too, how Genius, when its touch was true,
On humble walls its lasting fancies drew;[t]
Whose modern apes, ridiculously bold,
Hang their ephemeral daubs in frames of gold.[u]

[t] Many serious writers on Art trace its declension to the abandonment of this practice; in other words, to the introduction of easel pictures. I have always imagined this to be a sound view. The subject, however, has never been sufficiently ventilated.

[u] We have lately seen the walls of Burlington House stripped of its Titians, its Rubenses, and its Reynoldses, to make room for the works of our 'Academicians.' It has been said that walls have ears. They certainly can have no stomachs, or they would surely rise in insurrection against the change, in a manner calculated to interfere seriously with the circulation of Piccadilly.

In vain doth Heaven, while Gold thus rules
the earth,
With generous instincts sow the soul at birth.
Swift in the genial soil the seed takes root,
Then seeks the sun with many a venturous shoot.
But, ah, how soon the cruel outer air
Checks the brave growth and nips its promise
fair!
Warmed by the glow of Tasso's splendid lay,
Or borne by Dante to the gates of Day;
Softly seduced by Scott's romantic strain
To deem all ends, excepting honour, vain;
Or nobly trained by Shelley's burning song
To cherish an eternal feud with wrong,—
The simple girl constructs a future fair,
Rears a whole world of castles in the air,

And nowhere warned, or deaf to warning, deems
That life will clothe and justify her dreams.
As year by year the maiden grows apace,
And half the woman mantles in her face,
With sickening sense, sad eye, and sinking heart,
She sees her forecasts one by one depart.
Slowly, but, ah, too surely doth she find
That poets' tales no longer rule mankind;
That Peace is homeless as the hunted hare,
And Love far less a shelter than a snare;
That godlike Valour meets a demon's doom,
Whilst Prudence prospers even from the tomb;
That Youth, save schooled in Mammon's miry ways,
Groans o'er the lapse of unrequited days;

That Beauty, Genius, all are vain and cold,
Till foully touched and fertilised by Gold.

Soon as the time so dear to mother's vows
Draws nigh, to find the maid some fitting spouse,
Then most of all she learns what leading part
Is played by Gold in dramas of the heart.
Chance to young Hylas, beautiful as Dawn,[v]
And sweet as fair, she feels her fancy drawn.
Are you a nymph? one whispers. Let him pass.
He doth but gather daisies in the grass.

[v] The love of Hercules for Hylas, who accompanied him on his Argonautic expedition, the submergence of the youth by the Naïads on the coast of Mysia, and the story of the golden apples guarded by the Hesperides, which, among various other purposes, served as a wedding present to Hera when her nuptials were celebrated with Zeus,—are they not all written too fully in Lemprière, for one to fear that the ensuing passage will be obscure even to the least erudite of readers?

Where your cool wave, hidden from human eyes,
In which to lure and love him till he dies?
Bid him rejoin his Hercules, and seize
The golden apples of the Hesperides;
And then perchance, should none more rich than he
Engage your love, you may his Hera be.
Alas, poor Hylas! worse than Mysian fate
Doth his meandering flowery feet await.
If that a Solon, versed in every art[w]
Of song and science, touch the maiden's heart,
The neighbours softly whisper, Have a care;
Can Erudition keep a chaise and pair?

[w] It may not be amiss to remind English readers, ever disposed to suspect that the faculty of imagination is incompatible with practical abilities, that the great Athenian legislator first distinguished himself as a poet.

Pundits, alas, like fools, must pay their bills,
And Knowledge figures sorrily in wills.
For single life learning is well enough,
But marriage should be made of sterner stuff.
Should Cato's fame her pious soul attract,
The whole world cries, The woman must be cracked.
What! wed with Virtue! Is the girl awake?
Sure, she confounds the altar with the stake.
Send for the doctor. Try a change of air.
Swear Cato drinks. In war and love all's fair.
Bring Crœsus to the front. At four he's free—
There's no one left to swindle after three.
In one brief hour behold him curled and drest,
And borne on wings of fashion to the West!

What though to regions fondly deemed refined,
He brings his City manners, City mind,
And cynics titter?—he laughs best who wins,—
A Greenwich dinner covers many sins.
What! dine with Crœsus? Surely. Is a feast
One jot the worse because the host's a beast?
He's worse than that—a snob—a cad. Agreed;
But then his goblets smack of Ganymede?
Do some strange freaks his conversation mar?
He stops your censure with a prime cigar.
A Norway stream, a shooting-lodge in Perth,
In practice look uncommonly like worth.
The Town to hear some new soprano flocks.
You long to go? Well, Crœsus has a box.
How at this hour are tickets to be got
For the Regatta? Crœsus has a yacht.

Goodwood is here. Your hopes begin to flag.
One chance awaits you: Crœsus has a drag.
You doat on Flower-shows: Crœsus has a bone.[x]
Be friends with Crœsus, and the World's your own.
Who could resist seductions such as these?
Or what could charm, if Crœsus failed to please?
Blinded and bribed, the critical are cured,
And loud extol whom late they scarce endured.
Caressed and courted, Crœsus grows the rage,
The type and glory of our Golden Age;
And Cato, Hylas, Solon, shoved aside,
Our heavenly maid is hailed as Crœsus' bride.

[x] Foreigners, and perhaps even some provincials, may require to be told that a 'bone' is the name given to the ivory ticket of a fellow of the Botanical Society, which represents the power of distributing admissions to its flower-shows.

Shade of Lucretius! if thy lyre waxed wild
With sacred rage for Clytemnestra's child,
And nought could hold thee as thy soul surveyed
The cursëd ills Religion can persuade,
How would thy verse impetuously shower
Sonorous scorn on Gold's atrocious power;
Embalm its victims with a touch divine,
And damn the monster in one sounding line![y]

[y] Who is not acquainted with the magnificent passage in the immortal poem of Lucretius, which closes with these scathing lines?—

'Nam sublata virûm manibus tremebundaque ad aras
Deducta est, non ut, solenni more sacrorum
Perfecto, posset claro comitari Hymenæo,
Sed casta inceste nubendi tempore in ipso,
Hostia concideret mactatu mæsta parentis,
Exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur.
Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum.

De Rerum Natura, i. 96-102.

I have ventured to translate this last line almost literally in the context.

Can honeyed forms or stereotyped applause
Alter the scope of Heaven's eternal laws?
What though with gifts should massive side-
boards groan,
And every heart be glad except her own,
And troops of blooming girls behold with pride,
Perchance with envy, this resplendent bride;
Though vieing voices hail her Fashion's queen,
And even a Bishop's blessing crown the scene,
No rites, no rings, no altars, can avail
To make a sacred contract of a sale,
Stir the far depths of the reluctant mind,
Or join the hearts which love hath failed to
bind.
If soul stands passive whilst the flesh is sold,
Is there no foul aroma in the gold?

Is the base barter covered by the price,
And do huge figures make the nasty nice?
The nameless outcast, prowling for her prey,
Renews her filthy bargain day by day;
Let Crœsus give her what he gave his wife,
She's virtuous too—at least, she's his for life.
Crœsus—but hold! Let Charity presume
That Crœsus' wife but dimly knew her doom.

The luckless maid, since knowledge comes too late,
In splendour seeks oblivion of her fate;
Of every tender pious aim bereft,
Hugs in despair the only idol left;
In alien worship seeks to be consoled,
And builds her hopes of happiness on Gold.

Gold rules her steps, determines her desires—
Mere puppet she, whilst Mammon jerks the wires.
Futile to ask if London suits her health—
Would you consult her doctor, not her wealth?
You soon are answered: Whether ill or well,
A house in Town is indispensable.
Where shall it be? On gravel or on clay?
Wherever tenants have the most to pay.
Price is the thing, not soil. If Fashion's camp
Be pitched just here, what matter dry or damp?
But, health apart, 'tis known that Crœsus' wife,
If left to choose, prefers a country life.
Well, she shall have it when the Parks are brown,
And Fashion, wearied, hath dispersed the Town.

But whilst the woods are leafy, and the lanes[z]
With lush wild-flowers rob life of half its pains;
While sweetest scents and softest sounds combine
To make existence, did they last, divine;
Not for the world must Crœsus' wife be missed
From fetid streets, foul rooms, and Fashion's list;
And only thence to rural refuge flies
As, self-exhausted, pleasant Summer dies.

Say, shall we marvel, amid scenes like these,
With all to dazzle, but with nought to please,

[z] I know of no argument against the doctrine of free will—not even the existence of such places as the Seven Dials—more troublesome and difficult to contend against, than the fact that thousands of men and women annually leave the country when it is become most lovely, for London when it is becoming most disagreeable. In many instances a perfectly charming rural home is abandoned for stuffy lodgings in the parasitical street of a fashionable square. Can free will possibly dictate so perverse and surprising a course?

If links of simple gold should fail to cleave,
And tempters prompt their webs not vainly weave?
See, Plutus, first in each ignoble strife,
Battered and bored, bethinks him of a wife.
The happy tidings, spreading through the West,
Fires each maternal mercenary breast.
The soaring dames parade their daughters' charms,
To lure the hug of Plutus' palsied arms;
And as brave Eld for one fair woman fought,
For one foul man our world to rage is wrought.
At last, opining he might chance do worse,
Plutus to proud Olympia flings his purse.
Olympia lifts it with triumphant smile,
Whilst round her crowds congratulating guile,

Escorts her to the altar, decks her brows
With orange-buds, then leaves her with her spouse,
Who, though his suit by golden showers throve,
Can grasp his Danaë with no thews of Jove.
O, who shall tell Olympia's tale aright,
Each splendid day, each miserable night;
Her thirst divine by human draughts but slaked,
Her smiling face whilst the heart sorely ached,
Or note the edge whence one we loved so well
To sweet, seductive, base perdition fell?
I cast no stone, but half by rage consoled,
I snatch the lyre and curse this fiendish Gold.

Though Beauty's fame oft spreads through all the land,
Splendour is far more curiously scanned;

And they who once upon Olympia threw
A passing glance, since she was fair to view,
Now gilded pomp and Ostentation's choir
Attend her path, of gazing never tire;
Suck up her speech, translate her silent eyes,
Each movement, look, and posture scrutinise,
Stalk all her steps, as matron, friend, and wife,
And feed in greedy gossip on her life.
Not mine to follow to the noisome den
Where woman's frailty stands the gaze of men,
And well-coached menials, limed with gold, detail
The piteous scenes that pass behind the veil.
Enough to know that, thanks to wealth, once more
Plutus can woo, e'en richer than before.
The tottering cuckold leaves the court consoled;
Considerate juries tip his horns with Gold!

Sure some malicious demon in the brain
It needs must be, drives men reputed sane
To spurn the joys adjacent to their feet,
In the fond chase of this receding cheat?
Say, when the Stoic on his tranquil height,
And swinish crowd, sweating in miry fight,[a]
In every age a like conclusion reach,
And sage and simple one same sermon preach—
That whether Heaven hath made one serf or king,
Reason alone true happiness can bring—
Can we but stand astounded as we scan
This race untaught, unteachable, called Man?

[a] There is an absolute concurrence of registered philosophic opinion on this point, from Epictetus to Goethe; and the commonplaces of the crowd, always so much wiser in speech than in act, universally assert the same conclusion. And yet—

Would you be truly rich, how small the heap
Your aims require, the price how passing cheap!
A modest house, from urban jars removed,
By thrift selected, yet by taste approved;
Whose walls are gay with every sweet that blows,
Whose windows scented by the blushing rose;
Whose chambers few to no fine airs pretend,
Yet never are too full to greet a friend;
A garden plot, whither unbidden come
Bird's idle pipe and bee's laborious hum;
Smooth-shaven lawn, whereon in pastime's hours
The mallet rings within a belt of flowers;
A leafy nook where to enjoy at will
Gibbon's rich prose or Shakespeare's wizard quill;
A neighbouring copse wherein the stock-doves coo,
And a wild stream unchecked sings all day through;

Two clean bright stalls, where midday, night, and morn,
Two good stout roadsters champ their well-earned corn;
A few learned shelves from modern rubbish free,
Yet always, Mill,[b] with just a place for Thee;
Head ne'er at dawn by clownish bouts obscured,
And limbs by temperate exercise inured;
A few firm friendships made in early life,
Yet doubly fastened by a pleasant wife;

[b] Into public life, whither Mr. John Stuart Mill has reluctantly allowed himself to be beguiled by interested prompters, that distinguished writer seems to carry only one-half of his opinions. It is to be hoped that he will retreat from it altogether, and—to alter a well-known couplet so as to suit the times, but whilst destroying its rhyme to preserve its reason—

'leave all meaner things
To low ambition and the pride of *crowds*.'

In any case, his written works will be an everlasting possession to mankind.

A wholesome board, a draught of honest wine;—
This is true wealth; and this, thank Heaven, is
mine!
And though you ransacked worlds from shore to
shore,
From sea to sky, you could not give me more.
And if, all these beyond, I still should crave
Something impossible this side the grave,
Let humbler souls my soaring hopes forgive—
After my life still in my verse to live.

Well would it be if Mammon's feverish
rage
Did but the vulgar and the base engage;
If those alone whose undistinguished name,
Haply if fouled, would shed no slur on Fame,

Sought in this sordid, despicable strife,
To find the good and snatch the crown of life.
But in the mire of venal fight embroiled,
Have we not seen the noblest scutcheons soiled?[c]
Not the proud thought that many a splendid fray,
When crowns obeyed the fortunes of the day,
To stalwart arms its pregnant issue owed,
Whose glorious blood in their own body flowed;
Not the remembrance that their sires did share
The toils that made this England great and fair;

[c] Scarcely a week now passes but some 'noble' name or other figures in the Bankruptcy Court. Would not the House of Lords do well to petition the Crown, in all such instances, to hold a title thus disgraced in abeyance, till such time as some future heir cleansed it from the blot? The step would be eminently conservative, both in its character and consequences.

Not their resplendent pedigree, nor all
The line of haught fierce faces on the wall,
That tells the tale of their ancestral hall,
Have yet availed, in days like these, to hold
Men, thus seduced, from the coarse race for Gold.
Have we not seen the generous beast, whose sires
Once bore their fathers into battle's fires,
By titled gamblers' mercenary taste
His once stout loins to nimble flanks debased,
Made for curst gold to sweat through all his pores,
The panting pet of blacklegs, lords, and whores?[d]

On such a course what dismal woes await,
Let the world learn by young Lucullus' fate.

[d] The collocation of words in this line is painful, and to no one more so than to the writer of it; and he will promise to expunge it as soon as, what are euphemistically called our 'Isthmian Games' being reformed, it no longer represents a fact.

Whilst yet the bloom of boyhood matched his cheek,
And all his duty was to master Greek,[e]
Make a long score, bound o'er the running brook,
Cleave the clear wave, Lucullus had a book.
No glorious volume was't, whose subtle page
The wisdom breathed of many a studious age.
No wealth of wit, no Learning's garnered sheaves
Lay, like a treasure, lurking in its leaves.
But, in their place, crabbed Calculation scrawled
Symbols which shocked and figures that appalled.
Not for sweet Fancy, nor the simple stake
Of generous sports, did he his tasks forsake.

[e] Many men, recalling their schooldays, will doubt whether it was ever seriously put before them, that it was their duty to 'master Greek;' but I speak of our theory of a gentleman's education, rather than of our practice.

Ere sentiment could move, or sense control,
Adventurous Greed had swallowed up his soul.
If Gold Acrisius' Tower of Brass could flout,[f]
How will the playground shut the monster out?
Thus by his own base instincts first betrayed,
The race of harpies lend their shameful aid,
With evil eye his smiling lands behold,
And smooth his path to infamy with gold.

At length behold him grown to man's estate,
Rich, noble, noted, lord of his own fate.
Here Duty beckons, Honour there incites,
And Love entices to its saving rites.

[f] The story of King Acrisius and his daughter, referred to more than once in these pages, has been delightfully told in English verse by Mr. Morris. Vide *The Earthly Paradise*, vol. i.

He heeds them not; he joins the madding crowd,
King of the base, the vulgar, and the loud;[g]
Builds his most precious friendships on a bet,
And through the gutter trails his coronet.
Vain fool! inflamed by flattery and conceit,
He marks no pitfalls yawning at his feet;
But, winning, deems the cunning snare his luck,
And losing, pays, to plume him on his pluck;
Accepts each challenge, doubles every stake,
While tipsy plaudits follow in his wake.
But what avails, if Fortune quits his side?
Curse on the jade, he cries, she always lied!

[g] I am aware that I have not sufficient authority to give classical currency to the popular signification here attached to the word 'loud;' and therefore, if it be considered that I have ventured too far in introducing it into the dignified heroic measure, I plead guilty beforehand.

Well, now's an end! . . . A comrade plucks his gown:

An end as yet, man! cut the timber down.
The luck will turn; you lost for want of skill;
Come, play again—you'll win. . . . By G—, I will!
Done soon as said. The swift sure axe resounds
Through the green stretch of his ancestral grounds.
The soaring elm, whose topmost boughs defied
The scaling valour of his boyish pride;
The umbrageous beech, beneath whose courtly shade
The loves that issued in his life were made;
The lordly oak, young when his line was young,
To which with pride inherited had clung
His sires and they from whom his sires were sprung;

Behold them now, around the naked hall,
One after one in fell succession fall.
Lo, the wide woods which centuries had seen
By frosts unmoved, mid thunder-fugues serene,
By thousand suns, by tens of thousand showers,
Fostered and fed, one greedy day devours.
And all in vain! Lured by the severed spoil,
The foul fierce harpies fasten on the soil.
'My lands on luck.' We take you. Clear the course;
Twenty to one upon Lucullus' horse!
One minute more, and poor Lucullus flies,
The beggared heir of all the centuries.

Then scoffed, and scourged, and stripped of all
his wealth,
His last friends leave him—energy and health.

Anxiety and fierce Excitement's flame
Have scorched his blood and shrivelled up his frame.
'Plum to a pony!' hear the cripple call;
'Ere six months pass, the grave will end it all.'
Lucky at last, he wins his bootless bet,
And dies of drink, debauchery, and debt.

Gone are the times indeed when savage Might
Usurped the throne and claimed the wage of Right.
No longer now the tiller of the soil
Sees his fair fields the lusty robber's spoil;
No timid burgher now grows rich by stealth,
Lest some rude noble swoop upon his wealth;
The quiet citizen no longer fears
A raid upon his money or his ears,

That local turmoil or imperial strife
Will wreck his home or leave him bare for life.
But say, is Force the only fearful foe,
Or the keen Sword worst source of human woe?
Wielding base weapons Violence disdained,
Cunning prevails where once Compulsion reigned.
The tyrant's lance, Oppression's piercing shaft,
Torment no more, but abdicate to Craft.
Could feudal despot swooping on his prey,
Could bandit burning for the unequal fray,
Could fire, sword, famine, spread more wreck abroad,
Than marks the path of Greed allied with Fraud;
Or waits on life, where no rude signs portend
When the dread bolt of Ruin will descend?

See the poor father, who for years has toiled,
At one fell stroke of all his store despoiled.
His was the pious wish, by daily care
And safe degrees to make his hearth more fair;
His the ambition—far too meek to roam—
To swell the simple luxuries of home;
By loving thrift to deck his comely spouse
With some poor gem, the summit of her vows;
To instruct his boys in every generous art
Which trains the man to act a shining part;[h]
By culture's aid to see his daughters armed
With each fair grace that in their mother charmed;

[h] It is a common opinion nowadays that the generous arts do not enable a man to shine, but rather the reverse, and that special not general education is the proper method of developing that which is in him. The 'poor father' in question must therefore be looked upon as an old fogey, who knew no better.

Year after year, as strength and vigour waned,
To find his fondest forecasts all attained;
And then, since faithful to the final stage,
Doff the hard harness from the back of age.
But watchful Greed with jealous eye beheld
Day after day his little earnings swelled;
Studied the tender workings of his mind,
Marked the fond aims to which his heart inclined;
With specious lips his trusting senses stole,
And with false visions fired his prudent soul.
Poor wretch! but yesterday in modest state
He lived, secure from every bolt of Fate.
To-day, he wanders feverish and depressed,
As though whole Andes weighed upon his breast.
To-morrow, back unto his home he crawls,
A beggared man, and at the threshold falls.

Now will no more his trustful wife behold
The gladsome face returning as of old,
And read in sparkling eye and smiling cheek
The day's good tidings e'en before he speak;
Never again in hastening footsteps guess
Some pretty love-gift, token of success.
Their blooming boys, for whom parental hope
So oft had cast the fairest horoscope,
And seen with fond anticipating eyes
Each proud successive civic honour rise,
Torn from their noble studies, have to crave
From base pursuits the pittance of a slave,
Pour the soul's wine into the body's sieve,
And grand life lose in mean attempts to live.[1]

[1] Many will here recognise an inadequate attempt to present, in an English dress, their old friend,

'*Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.*'

Perchance, at home their humble wants denied,
Gaunt Hunger drives them from their mother's side;
Leaves her to weep alone o'er what hath been,
And places ocean, pitiless, between.
The tender girls, their father's pride and joy,
Whose dreams a fiend had scrupled to destroy;
From childhood's earliest days whose only care
Was to be gracious, virtuous, and fair,
And who from Heaven could nothing else implore
Save to be all their mother was before;
Who pictured as their perfect scheme of life
A clinging daughter and a helpful wife,—
At one rude flash behold the world enlarge,
And stand, pale victims, trembling on the marge.

Little, alas, now boots it where they roam,
Since they must leave the tranquil shores of home.
Whether, poor slaves, they crawl with aching feet
Hour after hour from dreary street to street,
Or, as in mockery of home, alas!
Beneath the stranger's icy portal pass,
And thankless task and miserable wage
Their exiled cheerless energies engage,
Their youth, their life, is blasted at the core,
And Hope's sweet sap will mount their veins no more.
Should every door their humble prayers repel,
Scorning to buy what Hunger kneels to sell,
And they, half thankful that the strangers spurn,
To their own roof be driven to return,

How strange the scene that meets their wearied gaze!
How changed the hearth, the home, of other days!
Contracting Care usurps the mother's face,
Whose smiles of old spread sunshine through the place.
Alone she weeps; but should she chance to hear
Her husband's steps, she hides the furtive tear;
Follows his movements with an anxious dread,
Studies his brow, and scans his restless tread;
Assails his woe with every female wile,
Prattles of hope, and simulates a smile.
He, broken man, wrapt in perpetual gloom,
Wanders anon from vacant room to room;
Then, creeping back, the image of despair,
With a deep sigh he sinks into his chair.

He seldom speaks; and when his voice is heard,
Peevish its tone, and querulous his word;
And vain laments and childish tears attest
The lamp of life is dying in his breast.
Perhaps his death some timely pittance frees,
Secured by prudence in their days of ease;
And, O the pity! posthumous relief
Stanches love's wounds, and blunts the edge of grief.
Unless, indeed—for this too hath been known—
All-grasping Greed hath made that mite its own,
Filched from the widow her last hopes of bread,
And whom it ruined living, plunders dead![j]

[j] Life Insurances have long been deemed to constitute an unerring protection against the material misery frequently threatened by the demise of the family bread-winner; but recent exposures have shown that they too often only add one more terror to Death.

These are thy triumphs, Gold! thy trophies these,
To nurture fraud, and rob the world of ease,
Faith to befool, young genius to seduce,
And blight at once its beauty and its use.
Thine is the bait, as loveless hearths avouch,
Which drags fresh victims to the venal couch;
Thine the foul traps wherewith our ways are rife,
That lure them first, then close upon their life;
Thine, thine the springes, set in regions fair,
Whose unseen nooses strangle whom they snare;
The cynic glory thine to lie in wait
To make men little who had else been great,
Frustrate our plenty, aggravate our dearth,
And keep eternal feud 'twixt Heaven and Earth!

Lo, where huge London, huger day by day,
O'er six fair counties spreads its hideous sway,
A tract there lies by Fortune's favours blest,
And at Fame's font yclept the happy West.
There, as by wizard touch, for miles on miles,
Rise squares, streets, crescents of palatial piles.
In the brave days when England's trusty voice
Made grappling rivals tremble or rejoice;
When, foremost shield of Weakness or of Right,
She scorned to warn unless resolved to smite;
When, few but firm, her stalwart children bore
The terror of her Flag from shore to shore,
Purged Christ's dear tomb from sacrilege and shame,
And made the Moslem quake at Richard's name;

Taught the vain Gaul, though gallant, still to kneel,
And Spain's proud sons the weight of northern steel;—
Then were her best in no such splendour nursed
As now awaits her basest and her worst.
No kingly Harry glittering with renown,
No Edward radiant in a peaceful crown,[k]
Was housed as now, at turn of Fortune's wrist,
Some lucky navvy turned capitalist,
Some convict's bastard who a-sudden shines
In the bright splendour of Australian mines,

[k] Edward I. was, it is true, anything but a 'peaceful' monarch, in the modern acceptation of the term, for he was nearly always fighting; but he distinguished himself from the other martial members of his line by the reformation of domestic abuses, and by improvements of the law, which have won for him the appellation of the English Justinian.

Or subtle Greek, who, skilled in Eastern ways,
Exposes all Golconda to our gaze.
These, as to Pomp's pretentious peaks they rush,
Heed not the crowds their sordid conquests crush:
Secure in glaring opulence, they scan
With placid eyes the miseries of man;
Fat units, watch the leanness of the whole,
And gag remonstrance with a paltry dole:
Mid harrowing want, with conscience unafraid,
Die on the golden dirt-heaps they have made.
Here Plenty gorges gifts from every zone,
There thankful Hunger gnaws its meagre bone;
Profusion here melts more than pearls in wine,
There craves gaunt Penury some shucks from swine;

And whilst rich rogues quaff deep round roaring
fires,
At Dives' portal Lazarus expires!

Betwixt these fierce extremes of wealth and
woe,
A crowd of strugglers hustles to and fro,
Whose one sole aim and only hope in life
Are just to wrench subsistence from the strife.
To what base shifts these hideous straits compel
The straining wretches, let our records tell.
Victims of greedy Competition's craft,
We drain cheap poison in each sparkling draught,[1]

[1] It is not everybody who is shocked by this condition of affairs. A late Cabinet Minister, himself a celebrated reformer, has justified it on the ground that it is, at worst, one of the incidental evils of generous competition.

Purchase a lie in every vaunted ware,
And swallow filth in the most frugal fare.
Building a refuge for our age, we find
The crumbling mortar lets in wet and wind;
Face the rude waves, by science freed from awe,
To sink, poor dupes, on life-belts made of straw![m]

Nor this the worst! When ripened Shame would hide
Fruits of that hour when Passion conquered Pride,
There are not wanting in this Christian land
The breast remorseless and the Thuggish hand,

[m] About two years ago it was discovered that life-belts safe to drown you were one of the current manufactures of this country. Their composition was that stated above.

To advertise the dens where Death is sold,
And quench the breath of baby-life for gold![n]

Nor man alone, case-hardened man, surveys
These shocking contrasts with a careless gaze.
Fair melting woman of the tender breast
Here finds no room for pity as her guest.
Unsexed, she strains to Ostentation's goal,
While Splendour's dreams demoralise her soul;
Drains, like a goddess, hecatombs of lives,
Nor heeds who lags, provided she arrives.
See Claribel, by every gift designed
Mid anguish keen to be an angel kind,

[n] This, too, has been proved to have been an extensive because profitable trade, encouraged by our Golden Age.

Once plunged in rival factions' golden fight,
Turned to a demon in her own despite.
Behold, to-morrow in the Royal smile
Will bask the birth and wealth of all the Isle.
She, long abroad, received the summons late.
What's to be done? Nor time nor tide will wait.
She turns her wardrobe over, racks her brain;
Nothing will do. She wants a dress and train.
Drive to the modiste's. Not a finger free.
There's only Clara. Clara let it be.
But Clara's sick and sorry. Give her gold;
Her aches will cease, her sorrows be consoled.
It must be done. Sure Lilian there will glow
In gorgeous newness decked from top to toe;
Shall it be said that Claribel did less?
To-morrow, then, in time the train and dress.

So Clara drags her weary limbs from bed,
O'er the brave finery hangs her throbbing head;
Still as her senses swim sews on and on,
Till day dies out and twilight pale is gone.
Then, by the taper's soft and silent light,
Like a pale flower that opens most by night,
Her pace she quickens, and the needle moves
Subtler and swifter through the gauzy grooves;
But as the dawn on guttering sockets gains,
Her tired lids drop, and sleep arrests her pains.
But sleep how short! She feels her shoulder clutched:
'Clara, awake! the train's not even touched!
Day strides apace. See, there's the morning sun,
And ere again he sinks, 't must all be done.'

Again, again, the shooting thread she plies,
In silent agony of smothered sighs.
She seems to breathe her breath into the gown,
To give it life the while she lays hers down.
Fast as the task advances set by pride,
So fast within her ebbs the vital tide.
The daylight goes, and softly comes the moon's,
And then poor Clara over the last stitch swoons.

Meanwhile, the panting Claribel awaits
The precious gown within her golden gates.
It comes—it comes. Now who shall shine her down?
Not Lilian, surely? No, not the entire Town.

She not for worlds had lost this courtly chance;
And Clara dies that Claribel may dance![o]

If private worth, thus languishing, expires,
Will public Virtue keep alive her fires?
The slaves of wealth, in Britain as in Rome,
Bring to the Forum vices formed at home.
First the community, and then the State,
Falls to their fangs, which naught can satiate.
Not born nor bred to rule, of culture void,
And by no wave of young ambition buoyed,
Anxious on heights conspicuous to flaunt
Nought but the tawdry trophies they can vaunt,

[o] The Legislature has lately done much to put a stop to this particular kind of vicarious sacrifice; but every year, as the season comes round, the summonses of the West-end police-courts testify to the profound significance of the old exclamation, *Quid leges sine moribus?*

They woo the grasping crowd with golden guile,
And spread Corruption's canker through the Isle.
You want a seat? Then boldly sate your itch.
Be very radical, and very rich.[p]
Sell your opinions first to please the pure,
Then buy the sordid, and your triumph's sure.
Do all, in brief, that honest men abhor,
And England hails another Senator.

See the vain Tribune who, in lust of power,
Bows to the base exactions of the hour,

[p] Of the candidate who is both very Radical and very rich, it may be said *Omne tulit punctum;* but if you are only *rather* Conservative, and, as young ladies say, very, *very* rich, the same result may be attained. It is obvious, however, that the latter combination cannot be expected to occur quite so often as the former; and thus the composition of the House of Commons is satisfactorily accounted for.

And, fooled by sycophants, stands forth at last
A devotee turned sworn iconoclast!
Behind him sit dense rows of golden mutes,
Deaf to whate'er demonstrates or refutes,
Ready to vote, rescind, obey in all
The whip demands, as hounds the huntsman's call.[q]
They neither know nor reck what helpful deeds
In this grave hour their perilled Country needs.
They want to see their daughters nobly wed,
Their wives at Court, their own names trumpeted,
Their private Bills advanced another stage,
Their schemes of plunder foisted on the age.

[q] In a recent debate in the Commons, a noble lord, who has certainly distinguished himself both inside the House and out of it, by independence of judgment and character, was accused of having boasted that he was its only 'unwhipped' member. He disclaimed the impeachment; but the claim, if made, would not have been a very exaggerated one.

Leave them but these, the gamblers come to call,
Nor heed an Empire nodding to its fall!

When Power is built on props like these, how vain
The hope that Law the giddy will restrain!
Spoilt by twin sops, servility and gold,
The headstrong crowd is then but ill controlled.
In vain they now would sway who lately served,
And Riot cows Authority unnerved.
Better that such base compromise should end,
And the dread bolt of Anarchy descend!
Goths of the gutter, Vandals of the slum,
Thieves and Reformers, come! Barbarians, come![r]

[r] There are reformers and reformers; indeed, the author humbly aspires to be one himself. Therefore honest men will not

Before your might let rails and rules be hurled,
And sweep Civilisation from the world!

Nor now, alas, do Commoners alone
To private ends the public weal postpone.
Those too, whom worth ancestral plants on seats
High above where all vulgar Clamour beats,
With paltry fear to their clipped ermine cling,
And shrink from right, lest right should ruin bring.[8]

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consider themselves confounded with the abominable ruffians that defied the amiable Minister who, in their most outrageous moments, could confront them with nothing more valid than 'for Greeks a blush, for Greece a tear.'

[8] A threat of Abolition is always considered sufficient nowadays to cause the rescission of a vote of the House of Lords, and it has of late been pretty liberally employed. It is sure to be used as long as it is found effectual. Might not the peers recollect, that though 'Death is a fearful thing, yet shamèd life is hateful'?

The Peers stand firm; the Commons disagree.
The Peers be—well, it now is close on three.
By five, a world of reasons will be found.
Throw Jonas over, or the ship's aground.
You know the fury of the hand that steers;
And what were Britain with no House of Peers?
Would Primogeniture its fall survive,
Or even Property be kept alive?
Let Herbert fume, or frantic Cecil chafe,[t]
Better a deal to choose the side that's safe;
Bow to the will of Finlen and his hordes,
And still thank Heavën for a House of Lords![u]

[t] Lord Carnarvon and Lord Salisbury are both duly alive to the indignities inflicted on the Upper and wiser House by the Lower and more foolish one; but even the latter, despite the high opinion entertained of him by his backers, has neither done nor suggested anything to resent or remedy the perpetually recurring affront.

[u] An exclamation which, though historical, can scarcely now be repeated without a smile.

Thus may the British breast exult to think
That noble names can sell ignoble ink;[v]
That ill-got gains, if deftly spent, unlock
Birth's choicest circles to the ambitious smock;
That Dives foul mounts fine Aristo's stairs,
If but Aristo Dives' plunder shares;[w]
And half Debrett urbanely flocks to White's,[x]
To back the boor who saves them from the kites.

[v] A book with a noble name on the title-page, no matter of what trash it consists, is nowadays sure of a certain sale; and a well-known publisher candidly professes not to burn his fingers with poetry—except for a peer. No one can be otherwise than delighted when English literature, already adorned by several noble names, adds another to the list; but gentlemen and ladies who have neither love nor taste for letters may well be implored not to injure their order by too naked a sale of its incidental advantages.

[w] A style of bargain that is now quite the mode, and accounts for the appearance in civilised circles of certain strange and amorphous creatures. Future writers on the social species will doubtless speak of the process by which these are assimilated as one of natural selection.

[x] It must be understood that White's is set down here only as

His son succeeds him. 'Make the son a Peer.
Why not? His income's eighty thousand clear.
New blood is wanted. Here's the very stuff.
Besides, he wields the county vote.' Enough.
But hold! there's Cato. 'Cato! are you sane?
Why, Cato's means but one small hearth sustain.
Ennoble Cato, you'll have Peers for life,[y]
Or else forbid the man to take a wife.

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the convenient representative of certain supposed exclusive clubs, and that it is not asserted that the incident referred to above has ever occurred within its walls. That it has occurred in similar institutions, the writer pledges his word. But why dwell upon the notorious?

[y] The argument in favour of life-peerages is, that you can thus ennoble men who are too poor to transmit a title. But why should not men who have titles be poor? If united with honesty, their poverty would go a long way towards saving institutions which wealth is, unhappily, undermining. The author believes himself to be a Conservative; but he cannot think that Conservatism consists in trying to stand stock-still, and meanwhile permitting oneself to be carried away. Men who desire to resist a current usually strive to swim *up* it. Suppose Conservatism were to try this ancient and simple resource.

He can't maintain the necessary state,
And would you have a poor name legislate?
No, Dives' son's the very man we need.
What says the Crown?' The Crown! Of course,
Agreed.
And the young fool, enriched by parent knaves,
From Ruin's jaws our Constitution saves!

Is there no path of honour for the great,
No sound and clean salvation for the State?
Must we for ever fly to shifts like this,
And trust to Gold to save us from the abyss?
Must honours old by new-got wealth be vamped,
And Valour's stock by plutocrats be swamped?
Back to your lands, base sons of splendid sires!
From spendthrift squares back to your native
shires!

Back, back from Baden, and leave Homburg's shades
To dazzling Jews and mercenary jades.
Leave London's round of vulgar joys to those
Who seek in such from base pursuits repose.
Cease to contend with upstart Wealth's parade,
To wring your lands to vie with tricks of trade;[z]
And, proudly spurning Glitter's transient lies,
At least be honest, if you can't be wise!
Worship your household gods, and spend at home
The solid earnings of the generous loam.

[z] It is well known that people in trade constantly spend more than their income, and actually return it to the Income-tax Commissioners as larger than it really is, in order to be thought rich, and so be intrusted with the means of becoming richer. Is it not truly melancholy to see men with fixed incomes, proceeding from land, competing with these decoy-ducks of extravagance?

Delve, fence, and drain; the dripping waste
reclaim;
With spreading woodlands multiply your fame.
Yours let it be to screen the reverent hind,
Who loves your presence, 'gainst the frost and
wind;
Scorning to count the profit, raise his lot;
Lure the shy Graces to his lowly cot;
Be, one and all, acknowledged, far and wide,
Patriarchs and patterns of the country side.
And whether demagogues shall rise or fall,
A Cleon mount, or Boänerges bawl,
True to yourselves and native duty, thus
Save this poor England by being virtuous!

And you, Sir, hope of this once famous isle,
Round whom its halo plays, its favours smile,

Hark to the Muse, which, poised on Candour's wings,
Flouts the base crowd, but scorns to flatter kings.
Hark, while she tells you, nor her counsel spurn,
From giddy Pleasure's gilded toys to turn;
That not from minions opulent or coarse
Do Princes gain their lustre and their force;
That Reverence anchors not in deep carouse,
And that a Crown fits only kingly brows!
Fired by each bright example, shun the shade,
Where Scandal best can ply her noxious trade.
Learn from your pious Father how to share
With hands, too lonely now, a Kingdom's care.
Be by your fair loved Consort's pattern moved,
And like your virtuous Mother, stand approved;

Do for this England all the Sceptre can,
And be at least a stainless gentleman.[a]
Be this too much, you well may live to find
That firmest Thrones can fail the weak and blind,
And, though no Samson, sharing half his fate,
Pull down the pillars of a mighty State!

Whilst our domestic fortunes thus obey
All-searching Gold's demoralising sway,
We hug the limits of our puny shore,
And Glory knows our once great name no more.

[a] Mr. Tennyson, in dedicating the *Idylls of the King* to the memory of Prince Albert, says, with much feeling and felicity,

'He seems to me
Scarce other than my own ideal knight;'

and in the body of the poem, where Merlin loses all patience with the 'harlot Vivien,' he puts into the wizard's mouth, when apostrophising Arthur, the epithet 'stainless gentleman.'

First are we still in every bloodless fray,
Where piles of gold adventurous prows repay;
But when flushed Honour sets the world on fire,
We furl our sails and to our coasts retire;
And, basely calm whilst outraged nations bleed,
Invent new doctrines to excuse our greed.
When gallant Denmark, now the spoiler's prey,
Flashed her bright blade, and faced the unequal fray,
And, all abandoned both by men and gods,
Fell, faint with wounds, before accursèd odds,—
Where, where was England's vindicating sword,
Her promised arm,[b] to stay the invading horde;

[b] The author heard Lord Palmerston declare in the House of Commons, that if Prussia and Austria attacked Denmark, Denmark would not be found alone. What became of these brave words, do not the various cataclysms of the last seven years abundantly inform us?

Bid the rude German drop his half-clutched spoil,
And scare the robber from ancestral soil?
The fair young Dane, beloved by every Grace,
And all the Virtues shining in her face,
Who, more an angel than a princess deemed,
Withal was even sweeter than she seemed,
With noisy throats we summoned o'er the foam,
And with cheap cheers escorted to her home.
But when with streaming eye and throbbing breast
She, pious child, her loving fears confessed,
And, leagued with Honour's voice and Valour's ire,
Prayed us to save her country and her sire,
We turned away, and opulently cold,
Put back our swords of steel in sheaths of gold!

And yet what sandy base doth Gold afford,
Though crowned by Law, and fenced round by the Sword,
Learn from that Empire which, a scorn for aye,
Grew in a night and perished in a day!
Helped by a magic name and doubtful hour,
See the Adventurer scale the steeps of Power.[c]
Upon him groups of desperate gamesters wait,
To snatch their profit from a sinking State.
Folly, and Fate which Folly still attends,
Conspire to shape and expedite their ends.

[c] No doubt I shall be accused by certain people of 'baseness,' in 'trampling on the fallen;' but as my weak voice was raised against the Empire and the Emperor long before they fell, and as I ventured not only to prophesy but to pray that their end would come precisely as it did, I shall perhaps be allowed to use them, as I do here, to 'point a moral and adorn a tale.' They have themselves to thank for being already historical.

The Hour, the Man are here! No pulse? No
breath?
Wake, Freedom, wake! In vain! She sleeps like
Death.
The impious hands, emboldened by her swoon,
Choke in the night, and slay her in the noon!
Then, when vain crowds with dilatory glaive
Rush to avenge the life they would not save,
The prompt conspirators with lavish hand
Fling their last pieces to a pampered band,
Bribe cut-throat blades Vengeance' choked ways
to hold,
And bar the avenues of rage with gold!

Then mark how soon, amid triumphant hymns,
The Imperial purple girds the blood-stained limbs.

The perjured hands a golden sceptre gain,
A crown of gold screens the seared brow of Cain,
And golden eagles, erst of simpler ore,[d]
Assert the Cæsar, and his rod restore.
See round his throne Pomp's servile tributes swell,
Not Nero knew, e'er Rome to ruin fell,
Far from his feet the lust of glitter spread,
And the vain herd on Splendour's follies fed!
Nor they alone, the shallow, base, and gay,
Bend to this Idol with the feet of clay:
Statesmen and soldiers kneel with flattering suit,
Kings are his guests, e'en queens his cheeks salute;
Senates extol him, supple priests caress,
And even thou, O Pius, stoop'st to bless!

[d] The Roman eagle was sometimes of gold, but more commonly of silver.

And the World's verdict, ever blind as base,
Welcomes the 'Second Saviour' of the race!

And yet how weak this Empire girt with gold
Did prove to save when Battle's torrents rolled,
Have we not seen in ruin, rout, and shame,
Burnt deep in Gaul's for ever broken fame?
What then availed her courts of pomp and pride,
What her bright camps with glittering shows allied?
What, in that hour, the luxury which passed
To soldiers' lips the sybarite repast?[e]
Did all her gold suffice, when steel withstood
Her stride, to make her rash, vain challenge good?

[e] The periodical distribution of chicken and champagne was one of the Imperial methods of improving the fidelity and martial qualities of its prætorians.

Behold her Chief, in comfort longwhile slung,
By War's rough couch and random fare unstrung.
His vaunted Leaders, who to Power had mown
Their path with swords that propped a venal Throne,
Brandishing rival blades,[f] his brain confound,
While still, but sure, the solid foe press round.
See her soft sons, whom arms enervate lead,
Spurn the long marches which to victory speed,
And, fondly deeming Science served by Wealth[g]
Will snatch the fight at distance and by stealth,

[f] The ex-Emperor, whom official documents prove to have remained Commander-in-chief up to the very eve of Sedan, showed himself as incapable of composing the rivalries of his Generals as of furnishing them with a strategic plan of campaign.

[g] There was no more deeply-rooted notion in the ranks of the French army than that, with the chassepot and the mitrailleuse, they would be able to defeat their enemy without even allowing him to come to close quarters. The very first action undeceived

Smitten with fear at Valour's downright face,
And taught swift limbs in Flight's ignoble chase!
See one, see all, before the Victor fleet,
Then lay their swords, submissive, at his feet![h]

O hapless France! e'en then insurgent ire
Had your soiled scutcheon lifted from the mire,

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them, and they never recovered from the disillusion. They then affected to believe that the Germans defeated them by far-reaching ordnance and ambushed marches; but the author, who followed the fortunes of the victors during the whole war, can affirm of his own knowledge, whilst he is abetted by every candid witness, that the Germans defeated the French because the Germans were ready to die, and the French were not.

[h] That, once in Sedan, MacMahon's army could neither defend nor issue from it successfully, is indubitable. But why did it go there? There can be but one answer: In order to have an excuse to surrender. The Capitulation struck the writer, who was present at it, as even more ludicrous than humiliating; and at the moment itself, the sense of the ridiculous overpowered in the victors almost every other sentiment.

Placed the bright helm on Honour's front once more,
And laurels reaped more lasting than of yore,
Had not rich ease your manhood's marrow stole,
And gold emollient softened all your soul.
O, what a sight—a sight these eyes beheld—
Her fair green woods by the invader felled;
Her fields and vineyards by the Teuton trod,
Those she once smote encamped upon her sod;
Her homes, in dread, abandoned to the foe,
Or saved from rapine by obsequience low;
Her cities ransomed, provinces o'erawed,
Her iron strongholds wrenched by force or fraud;[i]

[i] It may possibly be urged, that a fortress cannot be said to be 'wrenched by fraud;' but the premature surrender of Metz is still a matter of so much obscurity, it has been thought its fall may at present be perhaps best expressed by that ambiguous phrase.

Her once proud Paris grovelling in the dust,
And—crowning irony, if lesson just—
The grasping victor, loth to quit his hold,
Coaxed slowly homewards o'er a bridge of gold![j]

Is there no warning, England, here, for thee?
Or are Heaven's laws balked by a strip of sea?
Are thy foundations, Albion, so approved,
Thou canst behold such downfall all unmoved?

[j] The author is unable to agree with those who think that Germany might well have waived any demand of territorial cession from France. On the contrary, he already held the view, before it was expounded to him at length by Count Bismarck as early as last September, that an improved frontier against the wanton aggressor was indispensable. But he cannot refrain from deploring and condemning the huckstering spirit which has wrung from France so enormous a money fine, when the splendid revenues of the provinces acquired are of themselves more than sufficient financial compensation for the sacrifices of the war. Germany will do well to guard against the *auri sacra fames*, which, he is disposed to fear, the sight of French wealth has already implanted in its breast.

Have we not marked how this Briarean Gold
Doth all our life and energies enfold?
And as our practice, so our doctrines too—
We shape new ethics for our vices new;
Our sires forswear, our splendid Past defame,
And in high places glory in our shame!
Hear our loud-tinkling Tribunes all declare
Once lavish England hath no blood to spare,
No gold to spend; within her watery wall
She needs to roll and wallow in it all.
Doth towering Might some poor faint Cause oppress,
They bid her turn, impartial, from distress;
Indulge her tears, but hide her ire from sight,
Lest a like doom her angry front invite.

And when this craven caution fails to save
Her peaceful fortunes from the braggart glaive,
They bid her still be moral and be meek,
Hug tight her gold, and turn the other cheek.
Her very sons, sprung from her mighty loins,
We aliens make, to save some paltry coins;[k]
With our own hands destroy our Empire old,
And stutter, 'All is lost, except our gold!'
With languid limbs, by comfortable fire,
We see our glories, one by one, expire;
A Nelson's flag, a Churchill's flashing blade,
Debased to menials of rapacious Trade;[l]

[k] It is true our colonies have still a sentimental, affectionate way of sticking to us; but we do our best to shake them off, and it is not our fault if the filial tie retains any binding force. 'Economy' is the justification of our spirited parental conduct.

[l] 'The final end of the expedition of Sir Samuel Baker, as far as its English abettors are concerned, is only too plainly

Lost by a Cardwell what a Wellesley won,
And by a Gladstone Chatham's world undone!
Pale, gibbering spectres fumbling at the helm,
Whilst dark winds howl, and billowy seas o'er-
whelm.

Yet deem you, England, that you thus will save,
Even your wealth from rapine or the grave?
Will your one chain of safety always hold,
Or 'silver streak' for ever guard your gold?
If through long slumbrous years the ignoble rust
Of selfish ease your erst bright steel encrust,

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expressed. The newly conquered Egyptians are to be compelled to grow cotton. Supply is wanted in the Lancashire market.' These are not my words, but are to be met with in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Nov. 19, 1869. How we act when we want a market for our manufactured goods, let our daring policy in China declare.

When Storm impends, you vainly will implore
The Gods of Ocean to protect your shore.
Bribed by the foe, behold Britannia stand
At Freedom's portals with a traitress hand,
Help the Barbarian to its sacred hold,
Then, like Tarpeia, sink oppressed with Gold!

Perish the thought! O, rather let me see
Conspiring myriads bristling on the sea,
Our tranquil coasts bewildered by alarms,
And Britain, singly, face a World in arms!
What if a treacherous Heaven befriend our foes?
Let us go down in glory, as we rose!
And if that doom—the best that could betide—
Be to our Fame by envious Fate denied,

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Then come, primeval clouds and seasons frore,
And wrap in gloom our luckless land once more!
Come, every wind of Heaven that rudely blows,
Plunge back our Isle in never-ending snows!
Rage, Eurus, rage! fierce Boreas, descend!
With glacial mists lost Albion befriend!
E'en of its name be every trace destroyed,
And Dark sit brooding o'er the formless Void!

TWO VISIONS.

PREFACE TO TWO VISIONS.

THE following Poem was composed one sleepless night in Rome, in the early spring of 1863, under conditions which those people who believe in the peculiar genesis claimed for their poetical compositions by Mr. T. L. Harris and other less distinguished spiritualistic writers of America, may perhaps think interesting and deserving of mention. The author was certainly quite wide awake at the time, and distinctly heard and appreciated the musical accompaniment of the fountain in the Piazza di Spagna, hard below the window of his apartment. But there had been so utter an absence of anything like preparation or intention to compose the Poem, and its stanzas rushed upon him with so much suddenness, and at once in so absolute a form—never since altered—that he has always felt at a loss how fully to account for them. The one fact that throws some light upon them, and upon the far more material

point to which the author has just referred, is, that he was strongly disposed at that period to cherish certain familiar schemes of human regeneration, which a wider experience has made him regard as over-sanguine. The writer ought perhaps to add that he has never at any time accepted as real the alleged phenomena, much less as true the doctrines, of any form of Spiritualism. But it can point to a vast body of testimony, in many instances supported by most respectable witnesses; and no one, it appears to him, need shrink from lending his assistance, however slight, towards elucidating a strange and obviously important problem.

TWO VISIONS.

THE curtains of the Night were folded
Over suspended sense;
So that the things I saw were moulded
I know not how nor whence.

Straight I beheld a marble city,
Built upon wayward slopes,
Along whose paths, as if for pity,
Ran tight-drawn golden ropes.

Withal, of many who ascended,
No one appeared to use
This help, allowed in days since mended,
When folks had frailer thews.

The men, all animal in vigour,
Strode stalwart and erect;
But on their brows, in placid rigour,
Watched sovereign Intellect.

Women brave-limbed, sound-lunged, full-breasted,
Walked at a rhythmic pace;
Yet not for that the less invested
With every female grace.

Unveiled and wholly unattended,
Strolled maidens to and fro:
Youths looked respect, but never bended
Obsequiously low.

And each with other, sans condition,
Held parley brief or long,
Without provoking rash suspicion
Of marriage or of wrong.

Distinction none of wooed or winning,
And no one made remark,
Till came they where the old were spinning,
As it was growing dark.

And saying—hushed untimely laughter—
'Henceforward we are one,'
Went homewards. Nor could ever after
Such Sanction be undone.

All were well clad, but none were better,
And gems beheld I none,
Save where there hung a jewelled fetter,
Symbolic, in the sun.

I found Cathedral none nor steeple,
Nor loud defiant choirs;
No martyr worshipped by the people,
On half-extinguished pyres.

But oft exclaimed they one to other,
Or as they passed or stood,
'Let us coöperate, my brother;
For God is very good.'

I saw a noble-looking maiden
Close Dante's solemn book,
Go, and return with linen laden,
And wash it in the brook.

Anon, a broad-browed poet dragging
Logs for his hearth along,
Without one single moment flagging
In shaping of his song.

Each one some handicraft attempted,
Or holp the willing soil:
None but the agëd were exempted
From communistic toil.

Yet 'twas nor long nor unremitting,
Since shared in by the whole;
But left to each one, as is fitting,
Full leisure for the Soul.

Was many a group in allocution
On problems that delight,
And lift, when e'en beyond solution,
Man to a nobler height.

And oftentimes was brave contention,
Such as beseems the wise;
But always courteous abstention
From over-swift replies.

And—I remarked—though whilst debating,
'Twas settled what they sought,
There was completest vindicating
Of unrestricted thought.

Age lorded not, nor rose the hectic
Up to the cheek of Youth;
But reigned throughout their dialectic
Sobriety of truth.

And if a long-held contest tended
To ill-defined result,
It was by calm consent suspended
As over-difficult:

And verse or music was demanded;
Then solitude of night:
By which all-potent Three expanded
Waxeth the Inner Sight.

So far the city. All around it
Olive or vine or corn;
Those having pressed or trod or ground it,
By these 'twas townwards borne,

And placed in halls unbarred and splendid,
With none to overlook,
But whither each at leisure wended,
And what he wanted took.

I saw no crippled forms nor meagre,
None smitten by disease:
Only the old, nor loth nor eager,
Dying by sweet degrees.

And when, without or pain or trouble,
These sank as sinks the sun,
'This is the sole Inevitable,'
All said; 'His will be done!'

And went, with music ever swelling,
Where slopes o'erlook the sea,
Piled up the corse with herbs sweet-smelling,
Consumed, and so set free.

O'er ocean wave and mountain daisy
As curled the perfumed smoke,
The notes grew faint, the vision hazy—
Straining my sense, I woke.

* * * *

SWIFT I arose. Soft winds were stirring
The curtains of the Morn,
Auguring day, by signs unerring,
Lovely as e'er was born.

No bluer, calmer sky surmounted
The city of my dream,
And what few trees could then be counted
Did full as gracious seem.

But here the pleasant likeness ended
Between the cities twain:
Level and straight these streets extended
Over an easy plain.

Withal, the people who thus early
Began the ways to throng,
With curving back and visage surly,
Toiled painfully along.

Groups of them met at yet closed portals,
And huddled round the gate,
Patient, as smit by the Immortals,
And helots as by Fate.

Right many a cross-crowned front and steeple
Clave the cerulean air:
As grew the concourse of the people,
They rang to rival prayer.

On their confronting walls were posted
Placards in glaring type,
Whereof there was not one but boasted
Truth full-grown, round, and ripe.

And, with this self-congratulation,
Each one the other banned,
With threats of durable damnation
From the Eternal Hand.

Hard by, were challenges to wrangle
On any themes, or all—
From the trisection of the angle
To what they termed the Fall.

Surmounting these were Forms forbidding
Some strife about the Flood;
Since in such points divine unthridding
Shed had been human blood.

From arch and alley sodden wretches
Crept out in half attire,
And groped for fetid husks and vetches
In heaps of tossed-out mire;

Until disturbed by horses' trample,
Bearing the homeward gay,
Who, sleek and warm, with ermines ample,
And glittering diamond spray

That lightly flecked the classic ripple
Of their full-flowing hair—
For shivering child and leprous cripple
Had not a look to spare.

With garments which the morn ill mated,
Anon came youths along;
From side to side they oscillated,
And trolled a shameful song.

Fair as is fair a cankered lily,
A girl who late did lie
Beneath my window slumbrous-stilly,
Rose as these youths came nigh.

She seized the comeliest, and stroked him,
And plied each foul device;
And having to her flesh provoked him,
Then haggled for the price.

Hereat my heart—this long while throbbing,
And brimming by degrees—
O'erflowed; and, passionately sobbing,
I dropped upon my knees.

And made forgetful by the fluster
Of trouble's fierce extreme,
I cried, 'O Thou, the great Adjuster,
God, realise my dream!'

Up came the sun, and straight were shining
Steeple and sill and roof:
To such rash prayer and bold repining
A visible reproof.

Rebuked, I rose from genuflexion,
And did no more blaspheme,
Closing mine eyes for retrospection
Of the departed dream,

Where men saluted one the other,
Or as they passed or stood,
'Let us coöperate, my brother;
For God is very good.'

And I resolved, by contrast smitten,
To live and strive by Law;
And first to write, as here are written,
The Visions Twain I saw.

THE END.

LONDON:
ROBSON AND SONS, PRINTERS, PANCRAS ROAD, N.W.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018